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THE *Comptrol (Heary)*
Bishop of London's
SEVENTH
LETTER,
OF THE
Conference with his Clergy,



Held in the YEAR 1686.

UPON THE

KING's Letter, Dated 1685.

AND

Directed to the Two Arch-Bishops, with
Directions concerning PREACHERS.



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Good Brother,

I Am sure you must now be convinced, as I make no question you was then, that nothing could be more pernicious to Prince or People, than to carry the Duty of *Submission* beyond the bounds of just Reason or due Patience; and that therefore the first Article against *Meddling with Matters of State*, was a great Inducement to me, to invite you to this Conference upon the whole *Directions concerning Preachers*, which was managed to this effect.

You cannot but be every day more sensible than other, how seasonable this Letter of his Majesty's was, and how highly it concerns us to reflect upon it. Indeed there is nothing in it but what has been formerly directed by his Royal Predecessors after the same manner; and yet the Matter is of that weighty consequence, as not to be one jot the less necessary to be repeated at this time.

THE Reasons His Majesty urges, are from politick Considerations, and so Reasons of State; but there are others, which may be taken from Moral Topicks, of that great consideration, that we may boldly say, *The King has not more Interest in them, in His Royal Capacity, than the Ministers of the Gospel have in their Spiritual Capacity.* For *Disobedience* is as reproachful to the religious

as to the politick Person; *Sedition* as pernicious; and *Rebellion* as criminal.

BUT to come to the purpose, I will pursue the Heads we went through, as near the same order, and as much to the same sense, as my Memory will give me leave: We therefore considered the Directions under these two general Heads, as

I. *Negative.*

II. *Affirmative.*

I. The *Negative* part is contained in the first three Articles concerning,

1. *Matters of State.*

2. *Notional and School-Divinity.*

3. *Controversie.*

First, As to *Matters of State*, We are forbid to declare, limit or bound the constitutive Laws of the Realm between Prince and People. Every Nation has its peculiar Rights and Customs; the Decision of which belongs ultimately to the Resolutions of Parliaments, as they do ordinarily to the Exposition of the Judges. These things depending upon ancient Customs, original Contracts and Constitutions contained generally in the publick Records, are quite besides our purpose; they come not within the compass of our Studies, but are more proper for Statesmen and Lawyers to meddle with; and as they are of publick concern, so are they likewise of publick

publick Interpretation. However, should our Curiosity lead us into an enquiry after them, their Doctrin would by no means be a proper Subject for us to descant upon; because our business is to teach a Christian Behaviour upon all occasions, without entering into the Merits of any Cause betwixt Prince and People. We have been happy above all other Countries, in having Kings, that out of their Grace and Bounty, have made ample Concessions for our Ease and Security, by so fixing our Liberties and Properties, that we cannot be wronged in either, without the open Violation of a solemn Oath. If therefore we would speak honestly to this matter, we ought to do right to both Parties; and then think but how improper and ridiculous this would look out of a Pulpit, to be stating the secular Rights and Privileges on both sides. But if we exalt the Kings Prerogative above the Law, we do as good as tell the People, that notwithstanding their Rights, the King may ravish their Wives, spoil their Goods, and cut their Throats at pleasure. And thus we should pursue a Method the most contrary to the Mind of God, that possibly could be: For it would prove a Doctrin that might do much harm, and could never do good; either it would alarm the People with an apprehension that some Design were working against their just Rights, (For which pernicious strain of Courtisie, we may be sure a wise Prince, as ours is, would give us small thanks, since the least Mischief we could ex-

pect, would be Dissatisfaction, Murmuring, Jealousie, and a readiness to rebel.) or if it should operate as we intend, if we intend any thing else by it, we should hereby make a Halter for our own Necks, by disposing Men to avow a Principle that should invite their King to put a Yoak upon them. So that I look upon it as a Rule, that we ought in common Prudence to set our selves in this Affair; To be as cautious of Flattering our Prince into Tyranny, as of stirring up the People to Sedition and Tumult. For we have scope enough without a servile Flattery, to do our Prince right and our selves too, by preaching up a peaceable and Christian Temper, to wait with patience for the good effect of those ordinary Remedies we have by *Passive Obedience*, *Westminster-Hall*, *Parliament*, and what other Methods may be; which if they prevail not, will produce that in God's good time that may.

Secondly, **T**HE next thing we are cautioned against, is *Meddling with high notional Points*, which rather distract than edifie, and rather engender Strife and Envy, than procure Peace and Love. This is certain, that whoever preaches after this manner, either wants Discretion to make choice of more proper Subjects, or else, vainly puffed up by his fleshly Mind, prefers the Magnifying himself before the Edification of his Hearers. It is directly against the divine Rule, which says, *The Servant of the Lord must not strive.* W E

WE are particularly warned against the Scholastical handling of the Doctrine of Election and Reprobation, which are Determinations appointed by the hidden Wisdom of God's secret Methods. For indeed it is an unpardonable Presumption in Dust and Ashes, which cannot give a reason for the Growth or Colour of the least Herb that grows, to handle these Points, which have, and ever will be the Amusement of all Sects and Religions under the Sun, as being the abstrusest Parts of God's Workings towards the Children of Men.

THERE are several other Niceties relating to the Operation of the Spirit, and the Work of Justification; the critical Resolutions of which, some, by too much refining, have reduced to Air; and others, by endeavouring to make too familiar, have rendered contemptible.

AND therefore it behoved our Superiors to give a Check to the too bold and daring Spirits of some rash Men, that they might be prevailed with, if possible, to steer by a better Compass than that of their own Brains, and rather keep out at Sea than hazard their Skill too near the Rocks. Security and Satisfaction attend the former course, but Censure and great Peril the latter; the first may miscarry, but the other is next to certain of doing so.

Thirdly, THE last Negative Article seems to discourage that sort of *Controversal Preaching* which directs

directs to the distinguishing Tenents of the several Sects of Religion, as **Papery, Presbyterianism, Independency, &c.** in the managing of which, there is such a Prudence and Discretion requisite, as is not every Man's Talent. It is therefore very justly advised, not to be hasty in entering upon such Undertakings, but rather avoid the Invitations our own forwardness will be but too apt to draw us into. It is the ready way to draw Attention, and gain a sort of Applause, if we do but say sharp things and Satyrical: For the more slightly the Controversie is handled, the better it takes, provided the Argument be heightened with earnest Expressions or foolish Jesting. But however this Style may be pleasing at the first Accost, it can make no solid Impression to Edification, which ought to be the End of all Preaching. It will always be despised by wise Men, and do Fools no real good. And yet there is another sort of Treating our Adversaries, which is still worse, that is, *foul and reviling Language*; such Behaviour will either prejudice our Cause, or at least render us contemptible, that serve it in so dirtily.

THE way to avoid this in a great measure is, not to affect and force controversial Points upon a Text; but rather forbear, till we are constrained to it by the drift of the Subject we treat upon, or from the necessity of Time and Place. All things are likeliest then to proceed in the most reasonable manner, when they
flow

flow most easily and naturally from the subject of our Discourse. For then we are most apt to do wisely, and speak like rational Creatures. We shall then be better composed for the putting on of a Christian Spirit, in Expressions of Compassion, Good Will, Gentleness, Modesty, and whatever other Virtues may best soften and steal into Mens Hearts. To tell a Man at the first salute, that he is a Heretick, and is damned, is to provoke Choler rather than Attention, and utterly to frustrate our own Endeavours by frightening away those that we would be thought to invite to us.

BUT as we ought to be very cautious how we enter into Controversie, and very careful in the handling of it: so must we by no means be discouraged from it, when there is occasion. It may so fall out, as to be indispensibly necessary. *If the Plague be begun in your Congregation, you must make haste with your Censers.* If you see it approaching or hanging over, you must prepare your People with the best Antidotes you can think of. For Truth, tho it never fails in it self; yet is it very fleeting, if you are not industrious to keep it with you. It is the noblest Virtue in the World, and will be treated accordingly.

II. THE other General Denomination of these Articles is *Affirmative*: where you are told what to do in order to the more successful discharging your Ministry. And this contains four Heads,

1. *Catechising*

1. *Catechising.*
2. *Acquainting the People with the Doctrine and Discipline of the Church.*
3. *The Bishops being careful not hastily to Licence Preachers.*
4. *To use all Persuasion and Authority to stop the Licentious Practice of Profaning the Lords Day.*

I. THE First is a Direction to the teaching of such sort of Divinity, as may be most edifying: And this is most justly presumed to be *Catechetical*, so that there lies not only a Duty upon you to instruct Children in the *Catechism*; but likewise to pursue the same Method in your Sermons to them of riper years. By which means you will best improve the first Principles laid down, during the time of Childhood; in making your Superstructure more suitable and of a piece with your Foundation. It is indeed that course which most tends to edifying: And that chiefly for these three Reasons.

1. BECAUSE it admits of the plainest and easiest Style. For it is not perplexed with Doubts or the Improvement of refined Notions and learned Enquiries, as all other Methods are; but goes directly to the Point, in a plain familiar way suitable to the meanest Understanding.

2. It contains the fullest and most compleat Body of Divinity. It has all that is necessary and nothing superfluous. Other ways of proposing Religion, however they may be more elaborate, and make a greater boast to the World, through the contrivance of Humane Wit; yet you will find their Original mean at least, and sometimes base and degenerate. For either it smells of the Schools, or else proceeds from Arrogance, Vain Glory, or some such like foolish Passion: I do not say this in reference to those necessary Attendants of Chronology, History, or the like, but to the plain Doctrinal Point.

3. It has this Advantage, that it is more edifying, and settles Men better in the most essential Principles. For if you should preach to grown Men in another Style than that by which you had instructed them in their Youth, you would make them apt to despise the Foundation-Work of their Religion, and conceit themselves entered upon another Ordinance. They would be tempted to think the common Duties of Christianity only incumbent upon Boys: And so whilst they become speculative Christians, to follow their own Lusts. What swarms of Sects such Methods have visited the Church of Christ with, Ecclesiastical History will tell, and the sad Experience of our present Age afford too many woful Instances.

It is therefore pressed with great Justice, that ye should recommend to the People the most important Virtues of a true Christian Behaviour, and urge them by your Ex-

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ample, as well as Doctrin, that their Practicableness, as well as Excellency, may the more evidently appear. Ye are likewise enjoyned to warn your Flock against those Sins which are most prevalent in the present Age. For the end of all Religion is to eschew evil and do good, that we may glorifie God in our Souls and in our Bodies, which are the Lords.

IT is recommended to you, to take occasion now and then in your Sermons, to explain the several Offices in the Liturgy, that the People may the better pray with their understanding. For they are composed with that Gravity and true Devotion, that they could never have fallen into that Contempt, they did in the late times, but that Men generally were not so well possessed of the meaning and reason of them, as they ought to have been. And therefore there is another thing needful to the same purpose, and that is carefully and distinctly to read Divine Service. For it is a Paraphrase upon the Text, to read it sensibly, and with a due Emphasis.

II. THE next is the reading the 39 Articles and the Canons, yearly at least, to the People, which is an Injunction as early as the Canons and Articles themselves. And good reason there was for it.

THAT which distinguishes Christians from other Sects is the Articles of our Religion, the which whoever professes to believe, is a Member of Christ's visible Church. So that it is necessary for every Christian to be well informed of them. Not that every Article in the

39 obliges to an explicit belief: It is enough for many of them, that they are not opposed. However they are so instructive all of them, that they do in short give the People Marks, by which they may judge more easily, whether or no they that preach, deliver Sound Doctrine: And they that preach may the better be directed how to speak in the Style of the Church, thereby to preserve that Harmony and Consent, recommended by the Apostle in *speaking the same things*, 1 Cor. 1. 10. And thus giving the same sound, People may without Distraction know how to perform their Duty.

THE outward Adornment of this Doctrine, is to have all things done decently and in order; the World is constituted and governed by Order, and God is the God of it. This is the Discipline contained in our Canons, which adds Strength to our Faith, and Life to our Charity. For where we find Peace and Concord, we are inclin'd to believe, that God is there, and our brotherly Love is encouraged by such Agreement. It directs every one to his proper Post, and places all in that Harmony and Consent, and unites and knits them together in such close Order, that they stand like a Wall against their Enemy in the Day of Tryal. Ye cannot study these Rules too much, since they are those by which ye ought to walk in all your outward Behaviour towards your Flocks. They are the Directions for the Peoples Behaviour; that they may avoid the mutual Offence which Disorder and Licentiousness would cause among them. And therefore it is highly necessary they should be ac-

quainted with them; that they may not think the Church-Discipline to be a Device of their immediate Pastor, nor excuse their Irregularity upon pretence of Ignorance.

III. ANOTHER Injunction is concerning *Licences to Preach*: That care should be taken who are Licensed, and that it be only during pleasure. It is thought requisite likewise, that none for the future but the Arch-Bishop or Bishop of the Diocels do License, as being the most proper Judges. But this is a matter so highly concerns your Ministry, that it requires a very serious and distinct Observation, to weigh in what Latitude these Words are to be allowed.

THE Preaching of the Gospel is expressed severally; but there are but two Expressions that have any considerable difference: The first is *κηρύττω*, which signifies the plain denouncing of the Gospel, be it what it will: The other is *εὐαγγελίζω*, which includes the Merits of what is preached, by giving it the Style of Good Tidings.

HOWEVER, that Consideration which must give you your Measures, is carefully to distinguish the difference betwixt the Preaching of the Apostles, and that of their Successors. The Apostles laid the Foundation. *Built upon the foundation of the Apostle and Prophets*, Eph. 2. 20. It is very true, they built on, as occasion served: But their great Work was to discover the glad Tidings of the Gospel to all Mankind. *Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature*. Mar. 16. 15. And therefore it is that S. Paul assumes to himself, as an Apostle, a share in the Foundation-work. *I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth*

buildeth thereon. 1 Cor. 3. 10. It must be acknowledged at the same time, that the Apostles did upon occasion exercise the ordinary ministerial Functions, but with this Caution, *I baptized also the household of Stephanus: Besides I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel.* 1 Cor. 1. 16, 17.

HOWEVER it is certain, whether the Apostles had exercised it or no, that whoever had the supreme and extraordinary Power, had likewise that which was ordinary and common to other Ministers of the Gospel. For most certainly whatever Power remains to you, ye have it as the Apostles Successors. And therefore ye ought to distinguish between that Authority which ended with the Apostles, and that which is derived down to the Ministers of the succeeding Generations.

1. THE universal Jurisdiction they had, was peculiar to them. For tho every Bishop is a Bishop of the Universal Church; yet he is not an Universal Bishop. He is a Bishop every where; but has ordinary Power to act only within his Diocese.

2. THE Power of working Miracles and miraculous Gifts of Tongues, Prophecies, &c. were complete only in the Apostles. In the Infancy of the Church others had these Gifts; but it was in part, one after this manner and another after that, till in process of time all ceased.

3. THEIR Dictates were infallible; so as whatever they said or writ was certainly true, because they were inspired of God. This, none after them ever pretended to, except Impostors.

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THEREFORE we have nothing to do with these three Qualifications; which God hath judged to be more proper for Foundation-work than Superstructure, to constitute the Church than to continue it so established. So that to us is left only the Power of executing what is already settled, and the improving what we have before us to the best advantage.

1. **O**UR Call is of the same nature of that with the Apostles. Christ sent them, they ordain'd others, from whom has been derived a Succession to this Day. It is true, their inward Mission was much more glorious than ours, the Call more clear and powerful, adorn'd with divers Gifts; but ours comes from the same Fountain. For if we enter in by the Door, and are true Pastors, we were inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon us the Ministry of the Gospel.

2. **W**E have a Power to Ordain others to succeed us, as the Apostles had.

3. **W**E have a power to preach the Gospel, tho but at second hand: For we preach but what they delivered down to us, and what we add by way of Explanation, or what may be agreeable to that, which has been left with us. And this not as secure from all mistake, but according to our best Skill with the ordinary help of God's Grace and our own Sincerity.

4. **T**HE Administration of the Sacraments, and the performance of other religious Rites are incumbent upon us, as well as they were upon the Apostles.

5. **A**ND

5. AND the Power of the Keys is delivered to us down from their hands; whereby the Discipline of the Church is committed to us, for the Correction of those that do ill, by Excommunication; and the Comfort of those that repent, by receiving them into Communion.

THIS being the Case; we must allow the Apostles an uncontrollable Authority. For it was necessary from the consideration of what state the World was in. The World was in darkness, and under the shadow of Death: When Christ, who is the Fountain of Light sent his Lights into the World to direct into the way of Life. He gave them Power accordingly to command the Elements, and do Miracles at will; that the grossest Opposers might by silenc'd, if not convinc'd. Ye may see the Conflict they had with the World by what *S. Paul* says to the *Ephesians*. *We wrestle against principalities, against powers, against the Rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places*, Ch. 6. v. 12. And the bold consequence of it. *Our weapons are mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds: casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts it self against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; and having in a readiness to avenge all disobedience.* 2 Cor. 10. 4, 5, 6. This was the Work and this the success of it.

BUT our Authority is not attended with such a miraculous and unerring Power. We may be deceived, and may deceive. Therefore are we under a coercive Power, may be restrained from the exercise of our Functions, and ought for Peace and Orders sake to submit to it. We have a Commission,

mission, but it is subordinate; we have Power, but it is controlable. Therefore is it to be no surprize to you, if ye are not left absolute Judges of the executive extent of your Power: But that where ye have no reason to look upon your selves as in a state of Persecution, ye are bound to submit to the restraints of your Superiours. I say then,

1. W H E R E I am forbid upon an account, which I think to be to the intolerable prejudice of Religion in Doctrine or Discipline, and that no Appeal can be had by reason of a general defection: There I put my self, but at the dreadful peril of being in the right, into a state of Persecution, and know Canonical Obedience no longer.

2. I F the wrong go no farther than your own Persons, ye ought to bear it patiently, and seek no farther, than by Appeal, if it may be had.

3. I T makes a great difference in this consideration, whether ye are only under the general Obligation of your Orders; or have the Incumbency of a Cure of Souls: Since ye may upon easier Terms be tyed up under the first Capacity, than under the second.

B U T I say not this to quarrel with the Article, which I look upon to be of great use: For it would be an Affront to God's Word, to let some have the handling of it. And if it be asked, Why then have ye such scandalous Priests? I answer with another Question, Why then have ye such scandalous Maintinance in many places? Besides there may happen such times, that the State may be concerned to put Restraints upon Preaching, to hinder Trumpets of Rebellion.

IV. **T**HE last Article is that which at all times ye ought to be concerned for: To see that the Solemn Day of our Religious Worship be observed, as becomes sincere Professors. But most especially at this time it lies upon us to apply double Diligence. For this Indulgence which the King has granted, upon the notion of having a Dispensing Power in himself, has been so little considered in reference to the abuse wicked and profane Men will make of it: That it has laid the Lord's Day open to all Contempt imaginable. We have already the sad experience of it. Worldly People stay at home on that Day and attend their secular Affairs: The Loose and Debauched lye at the Alehouse; and every one that fears not God, takes occasion to be an Offence to those that do. As to what Remedies we should use to prevent these Mischiefs, as much as may be: I think we fully considered in our last Conference before this, whither I refer you.

ALL therefore that I shall add, is to remind you, of what ye were at the time of our Conference so sensible: That greater Care could not be taken, than what every Circumstance of the present time stands in need of: We have a Prince of another Religion, who for that reason cannot choose but be most influenced by our Adversaries: And what the Mercies of that Religion are, when exercised to the height, ye all very well know. What if we have His Royal Word never so solemnly passed? There is no reason we should expect it farther to be made good, than we on our parts suitably behave our selves. If we be a lessening, hindrance or discredit to

our own Religion by disorderly Walking, supine Negligence, or any other Fault: to be sure he will then think it just to abandon us, as a lost sort of People that deserve no pity, but have forfeited all claim to his Protection. In which case to be sure he will set himself to establish that, which his affection must necessarily most incline him to. The least we can expect from one so wedded to that Religion, is that he should promote it all he could. And therefore should we make any default, it is but reasonable for us to expect, that he should endeavour to rid ours out of the way. Nay, should we be any ways careless or foolish at this time, it would be to play the Game into our Enemies Hands; who would not fail to make use of that Advantage to lead or drive away our Flocks, and leave us useless Shepherds. And what a shameful Reproach would this be to us in this World, and what a dreadful Sentence would it draw upon us in the next! Therefore my daily Prayer shall be, and I hope yours will be so too, that we may be couragious in this day of Tryal, and behave our selves like Men.

Your affectionate Brother,



to serve you,

H. LONDON.